



Sterile Storage Procedure

Procedure Number
WCDHB-PF-0016

Version Nos:
3

1. Purpose

This Procedure outlines the process to ensure that the integrity of sterile supplies is not compromised whilst in the Stores Department of the West Coast District Health Board (WCDHB).

2. Application

This Procedure is to be followed by all staff working in the WCDHB Sterile Store.

3. Definitions

There are no definitions associated with this Procedure.

4. Responsibilities

For the purposes of this Procedure:

WCDHB Procurement Manager is required to oversee all aspects of this Procedure.

5. Resources Required

This Procedure requires no specific resources.

6. Process

1.00 Introduction

1.01 The handling, transportation and storage of sterile supplies are among the most important functions of the WCDHB Stores Department. The basic principle of sterile storage is that once sterility is achieved it must be maintained until the item is used.

2.00 Environment of Sterile Storage Area

2.01 Best practice recommends that the temperature of the room be between 18 and 25°C, with at least two air changes per hour and the relative humidity be between 35 and 50%.

2.02 The Sterile storage area must be clean, dry, dust and lint free.

2.03 Shelving may be open or closed. If open shelves are used there must be a solid bottom shelf and items on top shelves must be protected from contaminants falling from the ceiling. Closed shelving is recommended to minimise dust build-up.

2.04 Sterile items must be stored 30cm from the floor, 5cm from outside walls and 50cm from the ceiling.

2.05 No sterile items should ever be placed on the floor.

2.06 A thorough, continuous programme for insect and rodent exclusion and control is essential in an area for sterile storage.



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Procedure Number
WCDHB-PF-0016

Version Nos:
3

- 2.07 Sterile storage areas should be located away from general traffic.
- 2.08 Only authorised personnel should enter the sterile storage area.
- 2.09 Sterile items should preferably be kept in containers.

3.00 Handling Of Sterile Supplies

- 3.01 The best environment cannot compensate for the improper handling of sterile supplies, so it is very important that everyone concerned should learn how to handle items correctly and understand why certain safeguards are necessary.
- 3.02 Hands must be freshly washed, using an appropriate skin cleanser, and dried thoroughly, or alternatively an alcohol hand gel/rub be applied to the hands and allowed to dry, immediately prior to handling sterile supplies.
- 3.03 More items than a container or shelf will readily hold should not be placed into or on them. Cramming in too many or overloading a container might damage the packets and their contents.
- 3.04 Lids of containers should close easily and not require force.
- 3.05 Rubber bands must not be used for securing stock items together.
- 3.06 Undue handling must be avoided. Inventory counting should be accomplished with as little handling of supplies as possible. Care must be taken to assure that sterile items are not bent, crushed or compressed, the seals inadvertently broken, or packages punctured as they are placed into or removed from storage.
- 3.07 Whenever a sterile item is moved or selected from inventory for distribution, the packaging should be inspected to verify that it is intact and dry. Any package that appears soiled, compressed, torn or wet should be removed from stock and discarded.
- 3.08 Any package that has been dropped or fallen on the floor must be inspected for damage to the packaging or contents. If the package is heat sealed in impervious plastic and the packaging is undamaged it may be wiped with disinfectant and returned to stock. If it is not sealed in impervious plastic or the packaging and/or contents are damaged it must be discarded.
- 3.09 Sterile items should be distributed to patient care areas in baskets or covered trolleys. Personnel may carry sterile items in their hands, but never under their arms or cradled in their arms.
- 3.10 Containers and distribution trolleys must be cleaned and dried regularly.



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WCDHB-PF-0016

Version Nos:
3

4.00 Cleaning of the Sterile Store

- 4.01 The Sterile Storage area must be maintained in the cleanest possible condition, since dust, insects and vermin all serve as carriers for micro-organisms.
- 4.02 All spills must be cleaned up immediately.
- 4.03 Floors must be wet mopped daily. Sweeping or dry mopping is prohibited.
- 4.04 Work surfaces and ledges must be cleaned daily.
- 4.05 Storage shelving and containers must be damp dusted weekly. When cleaning storage shelving and containers, care must be taken to avoid excessive handling of supplies, and surfaces must be dried thoroughly before the supplies are replaced.
- 4.06 Walls, ceiling, vents, and ceiling fixtures (e.g. lights, sprinklers, exhaust fans) must be inspected monthly for accumulated dust, lint and debris. These areas must be damp dusted monthly or as often as needed.
- 4.07 Transportation carts or trolleys and containers must also be cleaned on a weekly basis using a detergent.
- 4.08 Records must be maintained of the dates of all cleaning activities.

5.01 Stock Arrangement

- 5.02 Sterile supplies must be stored where they can be readily located for distribution. Stock may be arranged functionally (i.e. with related items grouped together), alphabetically by item name, or numerically by stock number. Whatever the system, each storage container or shelf location should be labelled with a description of the items stored there, including item name, stock number (if applicable), issue quantity and reorder information.
- 5.03 To promote safety, heavy items should be stored on bottom shelves and lighter, less bulky items on top shelves.
- 5.04 All external shipping containers or boxes must be removed from sterile supplies outside the sterile storage area. Only the inner box or liner may enter the Sterile Store.
- 5.05 The use of cardboard boxes to store sterile supplies is discouraged as this practice encourages the breeding of insects such as silverfish.

6.00 Stock Rotation

- 6.01 It is very important that the "oldest" supplies be issued first, because many have dates indicating when they can no longer be considered safe for use. Correct stock rotation minimises waste by reducing the number of sterile items that will have to be discarded. More importantly, it helps ensure that devices that may no longer be sterile will not be used.



Sterile Storage Procedure

Procedure Number
WCDHB-PF-0016

Version Nos:
3

7.00 Outdates

7.01 Outdates are sterile items that have surpassed their expiration date. They should never be issued from the Sterile Store; therefore all sterile items should be checked for an expiration date before being distributed.

8.00 Personal Attire

8.01 All staff working in the Sterile Store area shall wear clean clothing and a clean lab coat over their street clothes daily. Uniforms are available from the laundry on request if staff prefers not to wear their own clothing.

9.00 Transportation Of Equipment Between The WCDHB Sterile Store And Other WCDHB Facilities

9.01 There are times when equipment may be required for use urgently and may be therefore transported from Buller Hospital to Grey Base Hospital via hospital cars. When this occurs the equipment must be transported inside a tote box secured with a ratchet tie, and sealed in a plastic bag. The tote box must be secured with a safety belt, preferably on the back seat of the vehicle.

7. Precautions And Considerations

- ➔ The Sterile Storage Area must be clean, dry, and dust and lint free
- ➔ No sterile items are to be placed on the floor
- ➔ The Sterile Storage Area must be cleaned on a regular basis

8. References

There are no references associated with this Procedure

9. Related Documents

WCDHB Hand Hygiene Procedure
WCDHB Dress Code For Staff Procedure
WCDHB Single Use Items Procedure

Revision History	Version:	3
	Developed By:	Procurement Manager
	Authorised By:	General Manager – Corporate Services
	Date Authorised:	May 2009
	Date Last Reviewed:	January 2011
	Date Of Next Review:	January 2013